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PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICE
CLEVELAND, OHIO 44106
TELEPHONE (216) 421-7340

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MAY SHOW RETROSPECTIVE
OPENS JULY 13

The Cleveland Museum of Art's annual May Show of works by artists and craftsmen of Ohio's Western Reserve, one of the oldest and largest regional art shows in the United States, is examined in retrospect in an exhibition opening at the Museum on July 13 and continuing through September 12, 1977.

Designed to complement the Museum's 1977 May Show, which this year also opens on July 13, the retrospective exhibition consists of 91 works of art, including paintings, prints and drawings, photographs, sculpture, textiles, ceramics, enamels, and metalwork dating from the first May Show in 1919 through the 56th show in 1975.

The exhibition, installed in the Museum's classroom level exhibition area, was organized by Andrew Chakalis and Jay Hoffman of the Museum's Department of Art History and Education under the direction of Department Curator Gabriel P. Weisberg. Works were drawn from the collections of the Museum, which has annually purchased from the Show, and from local collectors and friends and relatives of artists who have exhibited in previous shows.

Entitled A Study in Regional Taste: The May Show 1919-1975, the exhibition demonstrates the high quality of work produced by May Show exhibitors, some of whom have achieved national and international fame, and provides a survey of changing artistic tastes and styles over the past fifty years.

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2-a study in regional taste: the may show 1919-1975

Of the 27 paintings selected for the exhibition, 19 date from the first two decades of the May Show--an indication of the strength and vitality of Cleveland area painting during the 1920s and 1930s. Except for a few abstract works executed in the late 1950s and early 1960s, all of the paintings displayed are representational--often depicting local scenes, as in August Biehle's Landscape, Cuyahoga River of 1921. The revolutionary concepts of 20th-century European art had little impact on local artists until after World War II, when they were exposed to the work of emigrant European artists or went abroad to study.

Dramatically illustrating the evolution in artistic styles from 1919 to the present are the sculptures in the exhibition, ranging from small figurative works in marble, wood, and bronze, like Alexander Blazys' Russian Dancers, exhibited in 1925, to large abstract works, such as David Davis' Corten steel sculpture of 1974, entitled Harmonic Grid XXV. Changes in style and subject matter can also be seen in the number of excellent prints in the show, from a Henry Keller etching of 1919 to a 1952 color woodcut by Roy Lichtenstein to a serigraph by John Pearson done in 1971.

Cleveland has long had a reputation as an important center for crafts; jewelry, metalwork, pottery, and various textile arts have been well represented in May Shows from the beginning. During the 1930s, ceramic sculpture and enameling on metal emerged as two important categories in the show, largely due to the talents of four artists whose works are exhibited here: the ceramic sculptors Viktor Schreckengost and Edris Eckhardt, and the enamelists Kenneth Bates and Edward Winter. In subsequent May Shows these four shared honors with a number of other outstanding craftsmen whose works are on display: the enamelists Charles Bartley Jeffery, Doris Hall, and Jean O'Hara; silversmith Frederick Miller;

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3-a study in regional taste--the may show 1919-1975

jewelry designer John Paul Miller; potters Charles Lakofsky, Toshiko Takazeu, and Howard Kottler; and weaver Dorothy Turobinski.

In the exhibition catalog Jay Hoffman traces the history of the May Show from its beginnings in 1915 when the Cleveland Area Art Association approached The Cleveland Museum of Art with a proposal for a yearly exhibit of local arts and crafts to be held each spring at the Museum. During the Depression years, sales of May Show works enabled many artists to be at least partially self-supporting. Since then a number of galleries and exhibitions have provided artists with outlets for their work, but the May Show continues to play a vital role in the cultural life of the area, providing a unique forum for the exchange of artistic ideas. In his essay, Hoffman also examines changes in the mechanics and appearance of the show, from the early years when oil paintings were categorized according to portrait, figure, still life and landscape, to recent shows where the differences between various media are less defined and some works can easily be classified under several of the five broad categories of painting, sculpture, graphics, photography, and crafts.

Two Cleveland State University art history students, Dee Driscole and Mary Clare Zahler, have contributed to the catalog biographies of nine artists who have figured prominently in previous May Shows: painters August Biehle, William Sommer, and Shirley Aley Campbell, whose works were largely inspired by Ohio scenes and people; Kenneth Bates, whose handsomely designed enamels have been exhibited in almost 50 May Shows; Edris Eckhardt, recipient of numerous awards for her achievements in glass and ceramic sculpture; Viktor Schreckengost, potter, painter and pioneer in industrial design as well as ceramic sculpture; sculptors John Clague and William McVey and printmaker H. Carroll Cassill, instructors at the Cleveland Institute of Art whose works and teaching have influenced many area artists.

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4-a study in regional taste: the may show 1919-1975

According to Dr. Weisberg, "These biographies provide some insight into the backgrounds, training and development of some May Show exhibitors and should be viewed as a start toward the compilation of information on many other artists who have made a lasting contribution to artistic activity in northeastern Ohio."

The 84-page illustrated catalog for the exhibition is available for \$3.00 from the Museum's sales desk.

Gallery talks on the May Show retrospective will be given by Jay Hoffman at 1:30 p.m. on Wednesday, July 13, and Sunday, July 17.

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For additional information or photographs, please contact Ann Edwards, The Cleveland Museum of Art, 11150 East Boulevard, Cleveland, Ohio 44106; 216/421-7340.